

Birdwood Ice House
U. S. Rt. 250 West
Charlottesville vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1077

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BIRDWOOD ICE HOUSE

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Location:

The Birdwood estate is located approximately .5 miles west of the intersection of U.S. Route 250 and the 20/250 bypass and .17 miles south of U.S. Route 250 near the town of Charlottesville, in the county of Albemarle, Virginia. The Icehouse, one of the four service buildings that surround the mansion, is approximately 30 feet east of UTM. 17.716900.4213420

Present Owner:

University of Virginia.

Present Occupant:

Unoccupied.

Present Use:

Used for special University functions.

Significance:

The Birdwood Ice house is one of the four service buildings that surround a pre-Civil War Neo-Classic residence. Built by William Garth, the main house and the four outbuildings were erected between 1818 and 1830 on land that was part of the 1734 David Lewis Crown Grant. Constructed by some of Thomas Jefferson's workmen, the Birdwood estate is an excellent example of Virginia plantation architecture and planning.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. History.

The Birdwood plantation was built on land that was originally part of the 1734 David Lewis Crown Grant, one of the four earliest land grants obtained in the present limits of Albemarle County, Virginia. In 1734, Joel Terrell and David Lewis obtained 3000 acres of land situated on both sides of U.S. Route 250, previously the Three Notched Road, and extending from Lewis Mountain west along the Ivy Creek. Twenty five years later, in 1759, John Dabney of Hanover County, Virginia, purchased for 100 pounds, 800 acres which included the present Birdwood tract, from Lewis and Terrell. John Dabney, in turn, sold the land for 300 pounds to James Kerr, an immigrant from Scotland, who leased the land for several years before he finally bought 600 acres of it in

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1773. He resided on the land for 27 years, during which time he served as Albemarle County Magistrate in 1783, as County Sheriff in 1793, and as an elder of the Presbyterian Church. In 1800, Kerr sold the tract for 1200 pounds to Hore Brouse Trist, who soon thereafter sold the property to Alexander Garrett. Garrett, in turn, sold the land to Thomas Garth, a large landholder and a member of one of the first families of Albemarle County. In 1811, Thomas Garth gave the land to one of his four sons, Jessie Winston Garth, who maintained ownership until 1817, when he sold the land to his brother William and moved to Alabama.

The house and service buildings that presently occupy the site were built by William Garth, who had previously lived in an earlier house across the road from Birdwood on the site where the Kappa Sigma National Headquarters now stands. Built sometime between 1818 and 1830, Birdwood and the four surrounding out buildings were erected by some of Thomas Jefferson's workmen who had built the pavilions at the University of Virginia. The style of the mansion paid homage to the Roman Revival style (popular during the early nineteenth century) and resembled the facade of Pavilion X, on the University Lawn.

By 1850, Birdwood was a prospering plantation. According to the census of 1850, William Garth owned 52 slaves, produced 30,000 pounds of tobacco, \$200.00 of "home manufactures" (wool and butter), and grew extensive crops of corn and wheat. The plantation prospered until 1865 when it was raided by General Custer and some of his soldiers. According to Ada Pyne, who witnessed the event, three members of the Jesse Union Scouts, disguised as Rebels, seized the mansion and prepared it for the oncoming Union regiment. The regiment occupied Birdwood for three days and pillaged the house and farm, especially the house, feeds, and meats. The invaders included a woman on

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horse back wearing a riding habit and said to be the General's "vivandiere." She hit the fowls with a short stick and escaped with a side of bacon on her lap and several fowls tied to the pommel.

William Garth died in 1860, leaving his wife Elizabeth, and eleven children: J. Wood, Edgar (who participated in a duel at Monticello with David Flournoy, a University of Virginia student of Charlotte Court House), Lewis, George, Eugene, Georgiana, Gabriella, Susan, Elizabeth, wife of William S. Bankhead, Celestine, and Alice. Although William Garth's will of 1854 stated that upon his death his property should be divided among his heirs (see Appendix ACWB 26-158) his family became involved in a 19 year chancery court case over the property. Finally, on November 17 and 18, 1868, the contents of Birdwood were auctioned off (see Appendix ACWB 28-18) and in 1879, the house and land were sold by William S. Bankhead of Alabama to Samuel H. Buck for \$25.00 per acre, totalling \$13,225 for 529 acres.

Samuel Buck retained the property until 1891, when he sold it to William C. Chamberlain for \$26,500. In 1903, Chamberlain sold the estate to Charles Edgar for \$22,000. He then sold the property to Hollis Rinehart in 1909. Hollis Rinehart, the son of a successful railroad builder, had moved to Charlottesville and had become active in local banking, real estate, politics, and community affairs. During Rinehart's residence, Birdwood became the center of social activity. To house large receptions, Rinehart altered the mansion and added a back porch to the house. In addition, he built a 175 foot water tower and added an apartment above the ice storage space in the ice house. At this time, a new porch was also added to the ice house. His changes were carried out in the Colonial Revival style, in keeping with the original Neo-classic character of the main house.

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Twelve years later, in 1921, Rinehart sold Birdwood to Henry L. Fonda for \$130,000. Fonda then sold the property to J.D. Wilde who subsequently sold the estate in 1940 to Cornelius W. Middleton for \$120,000 cash. Middleton kept the property until 1966, when he sold it (excluding the main buildings and 15 acres) to Birdwood Estates, Inc. In 1967, the University of Virginia bought the land for \$1,063,169 and in 1974, the University obtained the remainder of the land as well as the mansion and the extant service buildings.

B. Sources of Information.

1. Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia

Deed Books
Will Books
Order Books
Tax Books

2. The Daily Progress, Charlottesville, Virginia

Sunday, September 30, 1979, p. B1

3. Books:

Moore, John Hammond. Albemarle: Jefferson's County, 1727-1976, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976.

Rawlings, Mary. Ante-Bellum Albemarle, Charlottesville: The People's National Bank, 1935.

Woods, Edgar. Albemarle County in Virginia, Bridgewater: The Green Bookman, 1952.

4. Virginia Historic Landmark Commission File #02-3, Richmond, Virginia

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement.

1. Architectural character. The Birdwood Ice house is a brick, one story structure with a hipped roof and a wooden cupola. It contains a small one room apartment on the first floor and a round, 11 foot ice storage pit below.
2. Condition. Good.

B. Exterior Description.

1. Overall dimensions. The ice house, a one story building, measures 19 feet 9 inches along all four walls. The slant of both the hipped roof and that of the cupola is 28 degrees. The cupola is 4 feet 6 inches high and the ornament above measures 3 feet 6 inches.
2. Foundation. The foundations of the building are not visible but the protruding brick molding on the basement interior indicates that the foundation is of brick.
3. Exterior wall construction. The exterior wall is composed of unpainted red brick with five consecutive courses of common bond interrupted by a course of headers every fifth course and matches the pattern of the other three flanking small service buildings. The bricks are hand made and are said to have been laid by the workmen who built the Rotunda. Almost all of the original bricks and mortar are intact, except for a few areas in which the original lime mortar has been replaced by portland cement.

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4. Structural system. All four walls are brick on the exterior and covered with plaster on the interior. The roof construction is not visible.
5. Porch. A wooden entrance porch which was added to the house in the early twentieth century extends from the front elevation and measures 6 feet 5 1/2 inches wide by 4 feet 4 inches long. The porch is supported by two one foot square brick piers. Five wooden stairs lead up to the porch. Attached to the brick wall is a simple metal hand rail and on the other side of the stairs, a slender modern manufactured metal handrail has been installed. New lattice work spans between the piers and beneath the front stairs. The wooden balustrades are Colonial Revival and match those on the east porch of the main house.
6. Chimney. A single chimney exists on the interior of the east side of the building and extends through the roof. It is capped by three corbelled courses of brick laid in common bond. Inside the building, the fireplace has been covered by plaster and is inaccessible. Only part of the brick hearth is visible.
7. Openings.
 - a. Doorways and doors. The entrance, centrally positioned in the south elevation, consists of a single four panelled door. It is surrounded by a simple architrave four inches thick. On the east elevation, the board-and-batten door to the basement consists of ten vertical wooden slats.

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- b. Windows. There are three different types of windows on the ice house. These include a rectangular double hung six over six light window on the north elevation, a rectangular four-paned casement window on the east elevation, and a rectangular six-paned basement window on the west elevation.
8. Roof. Shape, covering. The structure has a hipped standing seam tin roof with a cupola topped by a wooden finial placed in its center. Curvalinear brackets support the overhang on all four sides of the building. Both the angle of the main roof and that of the cupola is 28 degrees.
9. Cupola and finial. A square cupola sits on a square drum in the center of the hipped roof. All four facades of the cupola are the same and contain five wooden ventilation slats. A small tin roof caps the cupola and is topped by a carved wooden finial 3 feet 6 inches high. The finial matches those placed on the other three brick service buildings that surround the mansion.
10. Hardware. On the east elevation, a small round 2 1/4 inch diameter metal ring is inset into the mortar.

C. Interior Description.

1. Floor plans.

- a. Basement. The basement contains a round stone ice storage pit with a diameter of 14 feet 4 inches and with a depth of 11 feet 10 inches. Surrounding the round stone opening are two layers of brick. The pit is accessible only by ladder. The floor of both the basement and the pit is of dirt. A course

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of brick headers protrudes from the interior wall suggesting that the foundations of the building are brick.

b. First floor. The first floor originally consisted of one room measuring 18 by 18 feet. When the building was remodelled, a small bath was incorporated, one closet was added, and the fireplace was closed.

2. Flooring. The first floor is of random width wooden slats; the basement floor is dirt.
3. Wall and ceiling finish. The ceilings and walls are plastered and painted on the first floor and exposed brick in the basement.
4. Doorways and doors. The entrance door on the first floor is four-panelled echoing that of the exterior. The architrave and moldings are simple, three inches thick, and painted white.
5. Trim. A baseboard trim extends around all walls of the house. Next to the closet, bath, and fireplace walls, the original baseboard has been replaced by newer, simpler trim.
6. Hardware. A new metal lock and doorknob have replaced the original hardware.
7. Lighting. Electric lights exist in the apartment on the first floor. There is no electric lighting in the basement.
8. Heating. The apartment is heated by a portable heating unit.

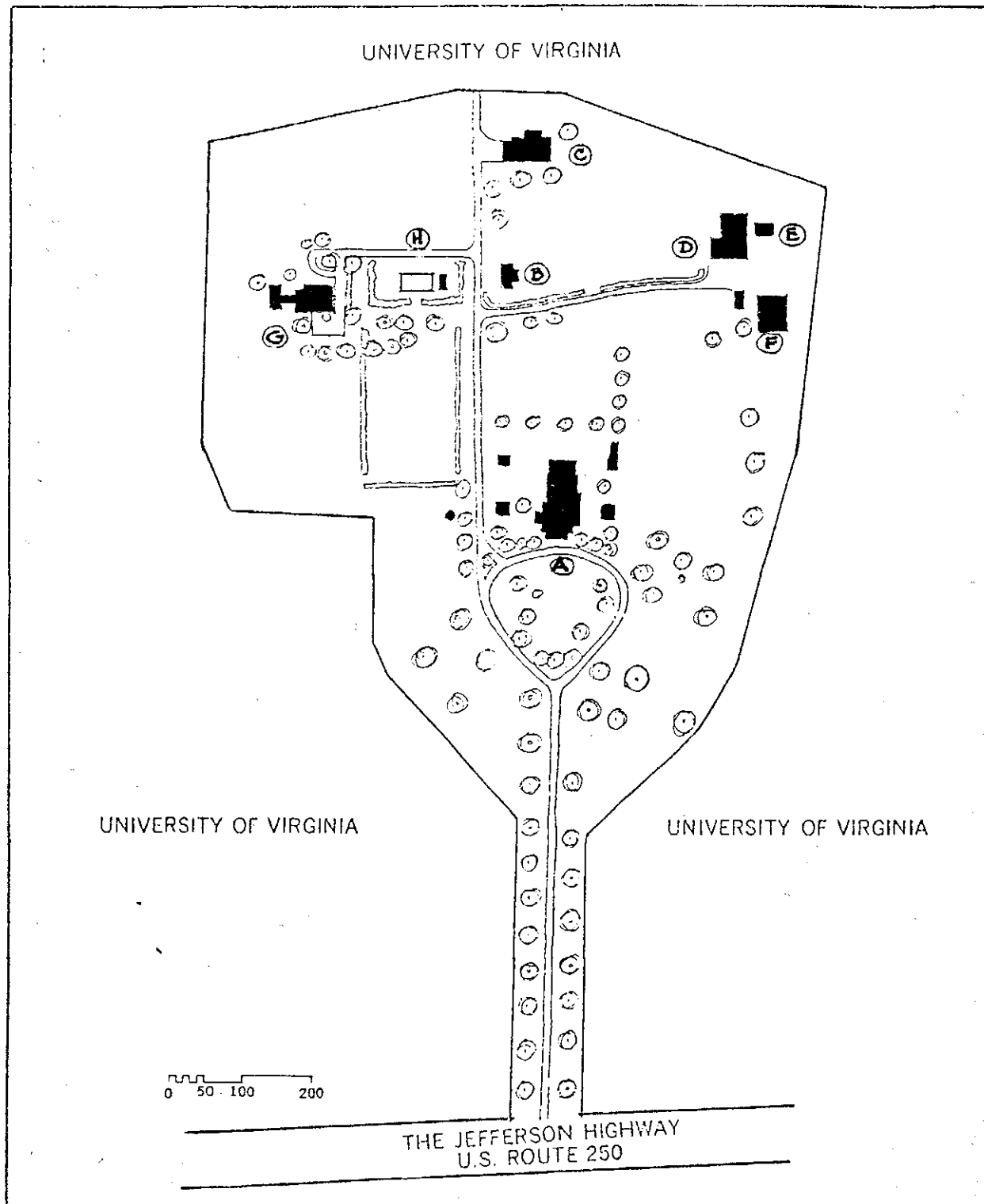
D. SITE.

1. General setting and orientation. Placed on 565 acres of farm land, the mansion faces north east. The Icehouse, to the east

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of the building faces south allowing easy access between the side entrance of the mansion and the small service building.

2. Outbuildings. The Icehouse is one of four brick service buildings that was built at the same time as the main house. Situated to the east and west sides of the mansion, the dimensions of each service building vary but the buildings are all similar in style and detail. They are capped with standing metal seam roofs and wooden finials. A brick 175 foot water tower is situated to the east of the Ice house. To the south of the mansion, there are additional outbuildings: stone slave quarters, a brick grounds keeper's house, a stone garage and apartment a stone shop, a brick stable, a brick guest house, and a concrete pool.
3. Roads. The original road which leads from U.S. Route 250 to the main house is .17 miles long and serves as the main entrance access. It is marked by two stone posts and flanked on either side by large trees. The road circles in front of the mansion and then branches off to a service road which provides access to the service buildings behind the house. All roads are paved.



LEGEND

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| A. Mansion (brick) | E. Shop (stone) |
| B. Slave Quarters (stone) | F. Stable (brick) |
| C. Grounds Keepers House (brick) | G. Guest House (brick) |
| D. Garage & Apartment (stone) | H. Pool (concrete) |

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken at the School of Architecture of the University of Virginia under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture. The documentation was produced in the Spring semester, 1982 by Andrea Nadel. The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.